



# **THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION**

## **THE GREAT SACRIFICE**

**WHY KARBALA?**

**THE GREAT PROTEST**

By

Prof. KARRAR HUSAIN  
Dr. S.M. HASAN RIZAVI  
Mr. S.M.R. SHABBAR

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# The Islamic Revolution

Prof. Karrar Hussain

1. Religion is not a set of rites and rituals; it is not the opium for the millions, nor the fad of a few cranks. It takes note of all our physical or psychic activities and processes; yet it is not to be identified or equated with any one of them; nor is it the sum of all of them. There is nothing fragmental or departmental about it. It lies within us and around us, at the heart of our personality and in the projection of our personality into the outer world. It identifies our humanity and defines the nature and scope of it. In the ever changing circumstance what we believe to be eternal and abiding; in the world of semblance what we hold to be true (Haq means what is true and abiding); those ideals which beckon to us like stars in a hurricane; those values which are both the law and the impulse of our action; our thoughts, our feelings, our actions in the process of aspiring to attain the highest available degree of purity and excellence constitute our religion. It is the necessary, inevitable condition as well as the quintessential and all-pervading reality of our life. We may deny God but how can we deny ourself.

This is religion in its personal aspect. But connected with it, there is a community aspect also; we belong to a certain community, a millat, from which, consciously or unconsciously, we get both the background and perspective for our beliefs and values and our outlook on life and with which all our hopes of the common historical life are bound up.

When we say that we are Muslims, we mean in the first place, that we have adopted the truth which is Islam as our way of life and have become committed to it and in the second place, that we are a part, a living impulse of the Muslim Millat, making it and being made by it and participating in its destiny.

All this is easier said than realized. We have developed a certain crooked mode of thought in treating of Religion. It is only with a strong effort that we can correlate Religion with life. In fact such an effort is the first step towards self-discovery and self-realization.

2. We hear a lot about revolutions now-a-days. It has become almost a fashion to talk in what may be called "REVOLUTION TERMINOLOGY". But it is significant to note that this idiom of language is an expression of the prevailing mood. When the tradition by which a society lives—its ideals, values and mores—is alive and the institutions adequately perform their function of regulating social relationships into a kind of equilibrium, change is a slow, almost imperceptible process and innovation is not very much favoured and conformity is approved and a departure from the accepted norms is condemned as a deviation. But when there are sweeping and radical changes in the objective realities and the institutions fail to cope with them and become unresponsive and irresponsible, and the consciousness of the resulting wrong and inequities grows too acute, men's minds become fascinated with the idea of revolution. In such times we are living.

Revolutions have occurred in the modern west, in England, in France, in Russia and they may be looked upon as an attempt to redefine justice in terms of changed conditions. Now what I would submit is that great revolutions have occurred in the East in the form of advent of a Religion or a great religious reform or movement and propose to study some characteristics of the Islamic Revolution.

3. Every revolution has some doctrine or dogma at the basis of it. The basic dogma of Islam is the Unity and Sovereignty of God. Islam affirms this dogma not as an ideology but as the Truth. A revolution emerging out of this metaphysical basis, however, traumatic it may appear in relation to a given historical situation is also restorative of the world order on the eternal basis of God's love and justice. The advent of Islam has been likened in the Holy Book to the downpour of torrential rains which is accompanied with dazzling flashes of lightning and deafening thunderclaps. Yet this phenomenon is by no means unique in the dispensation of nature. The Holy Book tells us that it contains no innovation in truth, that it only confirms the message and fulfils the mission of the older prophets. And yet if you compare the world as the Prophet found it with the world as he left it, you will realize what a mighty revolution had been accomplished during the course of two decades. This dogma is the driving force as well as the pivotal point, the sail as well as the beacon light which will enable you to explore all the secrets of life without letting you drift on the seas of time. This dogma which has an infinite range of being experienced and is capable of infinite degrees of illumination has the unique merit of filling the soul of man and resuscitating the element of wonder and mystery in the world. Other doctrines and dogmas may engage our attention, absorb our energy and even satisfy our understanding but they leave unanswered those "obstinate questionings of sense and outward things" which spring from the depths of our being. Other doctrines may convince us but they cannot convert. No other dogma is true in such a real sense and in such an immediate, certain and imperative manner. In its practical bearing it stresses the brotherhood of man and makes

it impossible for an individual or a class to claim, in theory or practice, the absolute right to lay down the law for others. It guards against too mechanical defferentiation of life, and creates and evolves human values. It saves us from that despair which may arise from our deep disappointments or from too determinist a view of history and it saves us from that boredom which is the inevitable fate of a godless society.

4. The Western revolutions sought to remedy certain existing wrongs. They set some definite, particular objectives before them. They had a special character, a partial aspect, some specific problems to solve—legal and constitutional or political or social and economical. The Islamic Revolution, on the other hand, did not ignore the totality of man. It took its stand on that basic fact. It did not set any definite, particular objective before it because life has no definite, particular objectives. After all, life is not basically a problem. In its inward aspect it is an experience, in its outward aspect it is an experiment. Islam acting on the higher level of a man's consciousness and giving him an insight into his place in relation to God and humanity and nature enables him to look into the tangled skein of history with understanding and experiment with all sorts of problems and thus enrich his experience of life and make it more meaningful in terms of his ultimate destiny whose limit is God. It may be said that instead of prescribing a patent remedy for one particular ill, Islam improves the general health of humanity and gives a deep understanding of its constitution so that it may be able to resist and fight against all the ills and explore new possibilities of good health. Failings in other revolutions serve to confirm the truth that the different aspects of life are so closely interlinked that life must be treated as one whole if permanently abiding results are to be obtained even in one particular aspect. Failing in any other revolution cannot be explained by anything contained within the doctrine of that revolution. Islamic revolution contains within its doctrine the explanation and the corrective of its failings.

The human character of the Islamic revolution is best seen in the tolerant attitude which it adopts towards other cultures and religions. There are no mass killings or purges or inquisitions in Islam. Other revolutionary doctrines and ideologies have got to adopt an attitude of fear and suspicion and militancy for their bare survival. Islam spreads with open arms; other ideologies advance with a clenched fist.

5. The Western revolutions, first and foremost, aimed at grabbing power so that the revolutionary programme might be put into action. Their protagonists seem to have believed that by destroying and subjugating the evildoers, they would be able to overthrow the evil. They sought to change the world without caring to change the quality of human stuff. It is true that man, to a large extent, is determined by his environment. We must recognise this condition for all fruitful activity. But it is also true that man creates his environment and as he is, so his environment will be. It is a fact that great

changes and revolutions bring to the fore certain hidden and unsuspected potentialities of man but it is equally a fact that without proper discipline of self, old interests and complexes and the lust for power and self begin to masquerade in a new grab. In any case, the process of recreating the individual and regenerating society has certainly a more abiding impact than the act of atomising society and restructuring the individual and produces more speedy result only if the agents are *patient*. Impatience can only be the virtue of those who do not know the Law.

The Holy Prophet did not say to himself: 'Let me first become the king of Arabia (which by the way he could) and because my programme is so good I should not mind the means which I have to adopt in attaining power.' He practised Islam and a world of light started emerging out of the surrounding darkness. And the more desperately the forces of darkness battled against light, the more surely were they driven to their doom. The call of God is the clarion call. It awakens all the dormant powers in a man. They attain to greatness and glory in every domain of life. But a very essential difference is to be made. It is one thing to infuse the political life of the people with the virtues of religion; it is something quite different to drag down religion into the political arena and make a slogan and a weapon out of it. Lust for power is the last infirmity of a votary of truth. The Holy Book enjoins:

"Let there arise out of you a band of people who call people to righteousness, enjoin what is good and forbid evil".

But God does not expect them to participate as a faction in the internal contest for power — on the plea that they are the religious elite. When the Holy Book speaks of God's favour on a certain people, the appearance of prophets and kings is significantly mentioned at the same place. Many a movement that started as religious reform lost their way in the relentless strife for political power.

6. Other revolutions have programmes and manifestoes and are preceded by a long, labouring period of struggle, on the level of both thought and action. Islamic Revolution started with faith. The Holy Prophet did not present a blue-print of the Holy Qur'an, full and complete, before calling humanity to Islam. And even today when we have (Praise be to God) God's blessing in the form of the Holy Book with us, discursive reason can only construct ideologies out of it; it is only faith which is the key to those worlds of life and light that lie wrapped up under the cover of its words. The simile is that of sowing a seed that germinates and grows into a tree with its roots deep and firm in the soil and its branches overspreading the whole sky, bearing the fruit of life in all climes and to all people. It is a continuing revolution and faith is the momentum of it. This is the revolution which can inspire hundreds of sub-revolutions within it as faith works out, in the light of

the Holy Qur'an, the infinite possibilities and implications of the first and the last principle of submission to no god but Allah, the God of Truth, love and justice, in the changing circumstance of Time and Place. The advent of Islam was a Divine Event following its own inner law. It is justified not so much by what went before it as by what came after it. Every vital thing justifies itself in this way. There is no special reason why you or I should have come into this world. We have to justify overselves by what we do and what we are and what we become—after we came into this world. There is always a cause and an opportunity and a scope for Islamic Revolution for life's business in unending and man's potentialities as Vicegerent of God are unlimited and the heights to which humanity can attain stand out unscaled and unmeasured before us.

# Zibhi—Azeem—The Great Sacrifice

Dr. Maulana S.M. Hasan Rizavi

The Quranic Philosophy of trial, patience and sacrifice

*"O Ye who believe! seek help with patience and prayer; verily God is with the patient ones. And say not of those who are slain in the path of Allah, 'dead'. Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not. And we will surely test you with something of fear, and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and crops; and give glad tidings to the patient ones, who when misfortune striketh them, say, 'Verily, we are Allah's and verily unto Him we are returning.' Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and His mercy; and such are the rightly guided."*<sup>1</sup>

The Same Philosophy represented and applied:

*"And said he (Abraham): 'Verily, I am going unto my Lord, He will guide me. O my Lord! grant me a righteous (son)! So We gave him the glad tidings of a gentle son (Ismael). And when (his son) reached (the age of) walking with him, said he (Abraham): 'O my son! verily I have seen in a dream that I sacrifice thee. So look, what thinkest thou? Said (the son): 'O father, do which thou art commanded. If God willeth, thou will find me of the steadfast ones.' And when they had both surrendered (themselves) to the will of God and he (Abraham) had flung him (the son) down upon his forehead, We called out unto him: O Abraham! indeed hast thou proved true the dream. Verily, thus do We reward the doers of good! Lo! that verily was an open trial. And then We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We shifted (this blessing) on him (who is from) among the generations (to come) in later times."*<sup>2</sup>

The great sacrifice referred to above has been presented at 'Karbala', in Iraq by Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. In the words of the poet of the East—Allama Iqbal :

غريب و سادہ و رنگیں ہے داستان حرم  
نہایت اس کی حسینیہ ابتدا بیں اسماعیلؑ

*'Strange, simple and colourful is the story of the sacred Ka'ba — the house of Allah. Its beginning is the sacrifice of Ishmael (the son of Abraham) and its pinnacle is Husain's martyrdom.'*

Imam Husain and his companions were the noblest models in preaching and practicing the Quranic philosophy of patience, sacrifice and martyrdom, to all mankind. Their unflinching faith in God and the Day of Judgment, their exemplary devotion, dauntless courage, and unfailing patience in the way of Allah at the hour of their trial at Karbala was a unique exhibition of the spirit of patience and martyrdom described in the Our'an.

In view of the sacrifices Imam Husain has offered in the way of God in defence of truth and for the guidance of mankind, he can be unhesitatingly declared to be the one and only representative of the Great Sacrifice and the king of the martyrs. He lost the battle of Karbala but won the great battle of trial, patience, sacrifice, martyrdom and life.

He knew all the perils of the situation. He steeled his heart to face them, but he was sure that many of his companions couldn't reach such a height of motivation. It is out of consideration for them that he came to their rescue with the words:

*"Know ye people! that ye have accompanied me in the full knowledge that I am proceeding towards a people who have pledged allegiance to me by their words and from their hearts. But now the situation is just the opposite. Satan has secured a sway over them (those who invited me to come) and they have forgotten Allah. Now they have no other motive except to assassinate me and those who are with me and having robbed my womenfolk to molest them. And I fear that you people may remain under a misconception and may feel ashamed (to leave me). For us, the family members of the Prophet, deception is unlawful. Therefore, whosoever finds the situation repugnant should withdraw at once. The darkness of night will be a curtain over them, and the path (of retreat) is without danger and even now the time is not yet midday (i.e. there is still time to escape)."³*

*"Indeed, I feel that there will be a battle with them (today). I myself have allowed you (to go). So all leave quite freely. There lies no obligation on you. The darkness of night will be your cover. Therefore use it (for moving away from here) in a body. Before departing, each of you may hold the hand of one of my family members. Disperse during the darkness of this night; and, leave me among these people; since, they are not after the blood of anyone except myself."⁴*

"You are free from your pledge of allegiance to me. Go and rejoin your tribes. Then the Imam turned towards his kith and kin and said, 'I make it lawful for you to part company with me, since you don't have the power to fight the enemy because of their large number and great forces. Further, they have no other target except myself. Hence leave me with these people. since God, the Almighty, will help me and will keep watch over me, as He has done in the case of my blessed forefathers'.<sup>5</sup>

Such miracles cannot be performed with a will and a heart which is worldly. They can only be performed by a spirit which is inspired by the celestial and the divine. He (Imam Husain) was great by birth. He also acquired greatness through his sterling qualities of patience, forbearance, sacrifice and martyrdom. And by his exemplary conduct, he inspired greatness in all those who followed him then, and, also those who love and follow him at present and in the future till the Day of Judgment.

In the light of his sacrifice, man learns the true spirit of submission to God to face the challenge of life and the divine trial, with patience and forbearance, and to distinguish what is just and unjust and what is holy and unholy. His patience was like a tower of light which no storm could harm, shining bravely in the face of fierce waves and mountainous storms and still guiding the ill-fated ships caught up in the fierce storms of trials and sorrows of the sea of life. His unfailing patience against each trial of life brought forth a dynamic spirit of patience and a living power among men. In the words of the poet of the East:

وان دگر مولائی ابرار جهان قوت بازوئی احرار جهان

'Imam Husain is the lord of the pious people of the world and he is the strength of the world's free people.'

در نوائی زندگی سوز از حسین اهل حق حریت آموز از حسین

'Because of Husain, there is painful sweetness in the song of life and from Husain, the righteous have learnt their lesson of freedom.'<sup>3</sup>

زنده حق از قوت شییری است باطل آخر داغ حسرت میری است

'What keeps the truth alive eternally is Husain—the symbol of dynamism (in courage and patience). Falsehood being grief-stricken is (ultimately) destined to die.'<sup>4</sup>

بهر حق در خاک و خوب غلطیده است پس بنائی لا اله گردیده است

'In defence of Truth, he (Husain) wrapped himself in dust and blood. Thus he transformed himself into the foundation of the unity of God.'

(Imam Husain represents the courage not to bow before the power of falsehood, whatever the cost and whatever the situation. This is the spirit which is the foundation stone of the unity of God, and disbelief in other gods.);

پاسو الله را مسلمان بنده نیست  
پیش فرعون سر افگنده نیست  
خون آو تفسیر این اسرار کرد  
ملت خواهید را بیدار کرد

*'To no other is a Muslim slave, except to Allah. Never does his head bow before any Pharaoh — tyrant of the time. His blood brought about the disclosure of this hidden code (of, Islamic ethics). In this way he awakened the slumbering nations.'*<sup>5</sup>

سر ابراهیم و اسماعیل بود  
یعنی آن اجمال را تفصیل بود

*'What was implicit in the sacrifice of Abraham and Ishmael became explicit in the great sacrifice of Husain.'*

تا قیامت قطع استبداد کرد  
موج خون او چمن ایجاد کرد

*'He has cut asunder the roots of tyranny for all time to come. The stream of his blood has created gardens (of freedom).'*

تیغ بهر عزت دین است ویں  
مقصد او حفظ آئین است ویں

*'The sword is meant only for establishing the prestige of Allah's religion. Its only aim is the preservation of the divine law.'*

تیغ لا چوں از میان بیرون کشید  
از رگ ارباب باطل خون کشید

*'When he unsheathed the sword of refusal (to accept any other God-hood) he drained out all the blood from the veins of falsehood.'*

نقش الا الله بر صیرا نوشته  
سطر عنوان نجات ما نوشت

*'He, by his blood, put the prints of the unity of God in the desert (of Karbala). Thus he wrote out the headline of our salvation.'*

(He proved that human salvation lies not in worldly power and possession, but in patience resulting from unflinching faith in the unity of God.)

رسز قرآن از حسینه آموختیم  
ز آتش او شعله با اندوخیم

*'We learned the secrets of the Quran through Imam Husain. From his flames (of courage, patience, and sacrifice) we have kindled the same fire (spirit) in ourselves.'*<sup>6</sup>

شوكت شام و فير بغداد رفت سطوت عرباناته هم از ياد رفت  
تار ما از زخمه اش لرزان پنوز تازه از تکبیر او ایمان پنسوز

*'Gone is the glory of Syrian (Umayyads) and Baghdad's (Abbasids).  
Forgotten is the glory of Cordova. But our hearts are still stirred by  
Husain's spirit (of patience and sacrifice). Our belief still retains its  
freshness because of his piety and worship of God.'*

He came from God and to God he returned at the divine call:

*"O tranquil soul at (complete) rest! Return thou unto the Lord!  
well pleased with thee. Thus enter thou in the midst of My ser-  
vants. And enter thou into My Garden—Eternal Bliss."*<sup>6</sup>

Such devotion, faith, forbearance and patience in the way of God can alone close the chapter of tyranny and every evil in human life and can open the doors of peace, success, welfare and triumph of truth and every good in life.

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Al-Baqara</i> 11, 153-157      | 4. <i>Tabari</i> —Vol. 4     |
| 2. <i>As-Saffat</i> XXXVII, 99-108   | 5. <i>Tafsir Askari</i>      |
| 3. <i>Nasikh al-Tawarikh</i> —Vol. 6 | 6. <i>al Fajr</i> XXX, 27-30 |

# Why Karbala ?

S. M. R. Shabbar

This small article is an effort to explain what happened on that 10th Day of the month of Muharram 1,335 years ago so that even today a large number of the Muslim community throughout the world spends the first ten days of the first month of the Islamic calendar in mourning. It is simply that Husain, son of Ali and Fatima, grandson of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was killed on that day. He, together with his few companions and relations, was surrounded by the so called Muslim armies sent there by the so called caliph Yazid whom Imam Husain refused to give the oath of allegiance. Yazid insisted on this oath of allegiance since he knew that if this grandson of the Prophet of Islam accepted him as caliph of Islam then he would have no trouble in securing his throne. Husain also knew that if he accepted Yazid, this would endorse all the un-Islamic activities which Yazid was openly exhibiting and it would be a complete betrayal not only of the principles of Islam, but also of the principles of justice and liberty.

Since the creation, countless human beings have come and gone and only a few have left their footprints on the sands of time. Those who have left a message of love and truth, and have guided mankind to attain high ideals are among those whose names live on to eternity. Their names can never be erased from the pages of history nor will they be forgotten by posterity. Among such people are a few saintly men who have, through their exemplary suffering and sacrifice, achieved their highest ideals and objectives. Husain's sacrifice in Karbala was surely among the most outstanding. He not only sacrificed his home comfort and his life, but also his dearest ones at the altar of the cause which he believed, and which a large part of mankind still believes, to be righteous and just.

Husain gave his life in the path of truth and the crimson stains of his sacred blood will remain forever fresh in the minds of people who care for justice and liberty and human dignity. *Although the actual sacrifice was over in one hot afternoon of the 10th day of Muharram 61 Hijri (680 A.D.) yet the few moments of the trial to which Husain was put were the outcome of a life-long preparation. Only one who was raised in the sacred lap of the*

*Holy Prophet himself, could have been equal to the task. This noble quality made its contribution to this finest hour of Husuin's life. Husain's life was shaped in the mould of the will of God. His learning, his spirit of charity, his integrity in conduct and character and indeed his entire life was a bright image of the Prophet's own life. This saintly life could have had no more glorious end than the one he had at Karbala.*

A quotation from one of the sermons of Husain will not be out of place here, for this will give us an insight into the mind of Husain, while he was on his journey from Hijaz to Iraq. Addressing a gathering of a number of people which included also a thousand strong army of Yazid under the leadership of Hurr, Husain spoke his mind. He said "Oh people, the Prophet has said that he who sees a tyrannical potentate transgressing against God and His Prophet and oppressing and wronging the people and remains apathetic and does nothing, neither by word nor by action, to alter the situation, then it will be just for God to place him where he deservedly belongs."

Much later, in 1861 Abraham Lincoln said in one of his speeches, "to sin in silence when one should protest makes cowards of men." This brings the above sermon of Husain into modern times with such astonishing similarity that even the most dogmatic agnostic cannot deny Husain's message which was for the whole world and not only for Muslims.

For over thirteen hundred years the unparalleled sacrifice and martyrdom of Husain held a sacred place in the hearts of Muslims and conquered the minds and sentiments of truth loving people all over the world.

Professor Brown writes in his history, "Is there a heart which does not melt with grief when it hears about Karbala? Even non-Muslims cannot deny the purity of spirit with which the battle of Islam was fought."

On hearing about the holy deed Charles Dickens in his papers on world history wrote: "If Husain fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and small children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for the sake of Islam."

Sir Frederick James, another well-known English writer says: "The lesson of Husain and every brave martyr is that there are eternal principles of justice, mercy and love which are immutable and unconquerable; and that if evil is resisted, if men are prepared to make sacrifices for them, those principles will always prevail. Throughout the ages, mankind has cherished courage and greatness of mind which for freedom and justice will not yield to the forces of tyranny and evil. Such was the courage and greatness of Husain."

To end this series of quotations, would it not be most appropriate if I quote again from one of the sermons of Husain during his journey to Karbala?

"You see to what low level the affairs have sunk. Do you not observe that truth is not adhered to and falsehood has no limit? As for me, I look upon death as but a means of attaining martyrdom and I consider life amongst transgressors, oppressors and tyrants as nothing but an agony and affliction.

Husain's fight against tyranny seems to have much deeper significance than a simple narrative can reveal. Firstly, it was a sacrifice for principle. He sacrificed his all, not even sparing the lives of his own children, so that justice might prevail and the truth of Islam might breathe to live. Secondly, Husain saw clearly that his resistance against the infinitely larger and better equipped army was a forlorn hope. He had not gone all the way from Medina via Mecca to wage a war but to make a stand for principle. At the beginning of his journey he had many supporters. Many thought that the Imam was going to fight for the throne and were anxious to share the booty. But the Imam knew what awaited them and from time to time he wanted the faint-hearted to leave. He even relieved them from all obligations of allegiance and pleaded with them to leave him for he knew he was going towards his death. But amazingly, at the same time when he was asking the faint-hearted to leave, he wrote to his true companions to go with him. He wanted to surround himself with a small group of brave and devoted friends who could face death and martyrdom with him.

In so many conflicts of history one may find men who stand firm to a certain limit but then cry out for help or run away when they see death face to face. In Karbala Husain did not want to see his companions below the standards Husain set for himself. They were selected for one purpose alone and they did not defy the trust Husain had in them. Right until the last man, his orders were not to seek battle or to attack. If the enemy came forth and called for a fight his men were to go out and meet the challenge. He did not spoil for a fight but did not hesitate to give battle when called upon although against overwhelming odds. This attitude of mind is positive proof that until the last man, and that person was the Imam himself, it was proven that the Holy Prophet's grandson was not out to wage war of conquest but to defend the religion revealed to the Prophet of Islam.

Thirdly, Husain fought the battle of Karbala on the basis of the stern laws of *Jihad*, as advocated and practiced by the Prophet of Islam himself. One of the basic principles of *Jihad* was that when one has to fight, it should be without, at any time, permitting personal emotions and prejudices to take possession of one's mind and heart. When all the male members of his family, apart from the ailing son, were killed and all the followers met the same fate, Husain stood alone to give battle and proclaimed, "Even now I shall forgive you if you come to the path of truth and justice." These words carry great meaning for us all because inspite of all the agony and pain Husain suffered, he had expunged all emotions of malice, rancour or revenge from his heart, thus fulfilling the code of *Jihad* to the last word.

Is there any better lesson in history of nobility and self control? Generally speaking, there are two emotions that exist within the human spirit: evil and good. Everlasting conflict rages between the two.

In Arabic *ammara* is the name given to the state of mind in which the soul seeks the fulfillment of its lower desires; and the state of mind in which the soul reproaches rebellious intentions is called *lawwama*. But the soul which has conquered all desires is called '*mutma' innah*' the peaceful and restful one. This is in perfect harmony with the Divine Will; for having triumphed over every kind of passion, desire, sorrow, pain and disappointment, this is the highest stage of spiritual achievement.

In Karbala Husain has shown the world that he had achieved this state of *mutma'innah* when he made himself ready for the sacrifice. The Quran describes this in one of the verses which is so appropriate to the story of Husain. *Sura Fajr* (Daybreak) last verse says:

“O thou restful and contented soul, return to thy Lord.  
Pleased and pleasing Him, enter thou among My servants,  
Enter thou My Paradise.”

1. Tabari *Tarikh al-uman wa'l-muluk* (Cairo 1939) Part IV, pp. 304-305
2. *Ibid* p. 305.

# The Great Protest

Prof. Karrar Husain

At a stage in his journey to Kufah when Imam Hussain's progress was intercepted and he was surrounded by the vanguard of Yazid's army, he, after giving due praise to Allah, addressed them thus:

"Ye people! the Prophet of God has said that whoever sees a ruler who is a tyrant,

Who forbids what is permitted by God and permits what is forbidden by God, who breaks the covenant of God, reverses the way (Sunnah) of the Prophet, and oppresses and represses God's people,

and after seeing all this, makes no protest, by word or action, then he will be deserving of the same punishment from God as the tyrant.

See ye not that these rulers have relapsed from obedience to God and submitted to the authority of Satan; they are spreading mischief on earth; have abrogated the laws of God; look upon the revenues of the state as their private property, and it is my right and privilege, more than of anyone else, to protest against this state of affairs, for am I not the nearest to the Prophet".

The grounds of the Great Protest are clearly set forth in this illuminating text. Very humbly, I venture to add just a few comments.

(i) A tyrant is one who rules the people against their will, who legitimises and secures support for his government, through beat or votes, by force or fraud.

(ii) In Islamic society, the Quran is the source of law and God is the absolute legislator. The law and the Truth are inseparable. To permit what is forbidden by God and to forbid what is permitted by God is not to amend the law which can only be interpreted, applied and extended but not amended; it amounts to distorting the Truth, suspending the Rule of Law,

and substituting for God's law one's own will directed by personal interests and desires.

(iii) The Islamic society is a revolutionary society committed to promote certain values in life with a view to establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Islam is a pledge, a submission, a covenant with God to promote those values. The way (Sunnah) of the Prophet is the custodian of those values. If an innovation is introduced which is favourable to the growth of those values, it is good innovation (bid 'at-i-hasana) and is tantamount to ijтиhad. If an innovation is introduced which is detrimental to the growth of those values, it is bad innovation (bid 'at-i-saiyya) and is what you would call in modern parlance, a deviation or revisionism. Thus 'breaking the covenant of God and reversing the Sunnah of the Prophet' means betraying the Islamic revolution and backsliding into the old way of paganism or bringing about a new order of paganism (Sunnat-i-Jahiliya).

(iv) The condition of mischief (Fasad), according to the Quran is not merely a state of lawlessness, disorder and anarchy but a state in which there is little social freedom and justice and is quite compatible with the presence of power and wealth in society. More than anything else, it is a distemper of wealth and power. More precisely, it seems to be a state where the government is all powerful and the ruling classes are wealthy and the people are suppressed, oppressed and repressed. Thus those who lived in the city of Iram of lofty pillars, the like of which were not produced in all the land, and the Thamud who hewed out their dwellings among the rocks of the valley, and the Pharoa, lord of stakes, are said to have spread mischief in the lands; for they transgressed beyond bounds.

(v) The state revenues are a trust; the ruler is the trustee; the people are the beneficiaries of the trust. If public money is used for the aggrandisement of the ruler, and for pampering a ruling class, be it civilian or military, and buying their support for the government, in short, if it is used in any way that is calculated to serve personal or class interests rather than promote general good, then it is a breach of trust.

(vi) Every muslim is individually and collectively accountable for the persistence of tyranny and mischief in society (zulm-o-fasaad), for acquiescence in many cases is tantamount to abetment. Those who claim to be leaders bear greater responsibility.

The indictment, translated in current idiom, would run somewhat as follows:

"Yazid is neither a rightful, nor a just ruler. He is a usurper and a despot, even though he might have given a constitutional colouring to his rule. He has suspended the Rule of law. His will is law. He is destroying

the values of the Islamic Revolution and converting it into an imperialism. He is corrupting the millat, both by spreading fear and conferring public favours. He is using public money not for public welfare but for personal gain and glory, and for building up a class of nobles and raising an army of mercenaries, who would support his government, right or wrong, and in return have a free hand in oppressing the people. It is the duty of every muslim to oppose and protest against this state of affairs, as effectively as he can; the higher his status, spiritually, intellectually or socially, the greater his responsibility.”

And the technique of his protest was as unique as it was effective. He could have sent his agents to different parts of the muslim lands and raised a host of his partisans and supporters in Yathrib, and Yaman and Iraq. He did nothing of the sort, nothing to divide or split the muslim millat. He just refused to acknowledge the Khilafat of Yazid. He became aware of the secret plots to have him murdered; the machiavellian practice of secret murders had been introduced into the muslim statecraft. He was not safe anywhere. Death was his destiny but he was still free to choose the form in which he would meet death. Hedged in by death on all sides, he struck out a path to conquer Death. He, with his family and friends, started for Kufa, from where had come a call for guidance, to which he must respond if only to justify himself in the eyes of God and man. On the way he was surrounded by the armies of Yazid. Firm and unshaken in his resolve not to submit and thus give his approbation to the way of life, of which Yazid was the symbol, he and his followers suffered greatly and fought bravely till they were all butchered and his women and children taken prisoners. By not relying on numbers and drawing entirely upon the infinite spiritual resources with which God has endowed man, he gave a new dimension to man's struggle for Truth and justice. This can come only of a complete-resignation to the will of God and the success of this method is directly proportionate to the purity of the motive with which it is pursued, and the freedom of the motive from any taint of selfishness. Thus equipped, with God on his side, man is never helpless. The helplessness of Imam Hussain was his most effective weapon; the grater the helplessness, the greater the force and effectiveness of the weapon. His enemies could only oppress, but every act of oppression perpetrated by his enemies was his gain; the more they oppressed, and they could do little else, the more he gained. His enemies, thus, played into his hands and his utter defeat became his sabsolute victory. The tragedy of Kerbala was the most glorious vindication of man and a witness to the almost divine powers that are in him. Leaders of a revolution sometimes murder their political enemies and call it a'purge'. Imam Hussain purged the Islamic revolution with his own blood. And if the purpose of a purge is to re-establish revolutionary values in their vigour and purity, then it was the most successful 'purge' in the history of revolutions. “Verily” says Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti “Imam Hussain put the Testimony of Faith (There is no God but Allh) on a firm foundation”.

While, he on the one hand, assiduously projected the Truth, by giving it voice and vision, it was his scrupulous concern that the vision should not become distorted by the fierce spirit of partisanship and factionalism. The technique of self-sacrifice could not be consummated in the raw and heated atmosphere of a civil war. It was Imam Hasan's 'Treaty of Peace' which made the achievement of Kerbala possible. In fact, there is the same relationships between Imam Hasan's "Peace" and the Achievement of Kerbala, as there is between the peace of Hudaibiya and the victory of Mecca. But desirable, very desirable as unity is, it is equally necessary to emphasize the right basis of unity. For there are different kinds of unity. There is a unity among a pack of wolves or a gang of robbers who are on rampage, marauding God's fair land. There is a unity among a flock of sheep, when exposed to a common danger. Yazid was also trying to impose a kind of unity on the muslims by crushing all opposition and forcing people to submit to the judgement of imperialism. The supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain recorded on the tablets of time the great truth that Islamic unity is only a reflection of the one-ness of God and manifests itself in the brotherhood of muslims. Brotherhood procures political freedom and precludes glaring economic inequalities. Such a unity alone is meaningful. Any other kind of unity is either a reflex condition devoid of any moral value or a shape of tyranny.

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